

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

USDEL SALT II

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1770

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (PARA 8 LINE6)

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, UR

SUBJ: ARBATOV ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS

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1. SUMMARY. USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV, SPEAKING TO

A GROUP OF WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS AND POLITICIANS FEB 5, SAID FORCEFULLY THAT SOVIET-U.S. DETENTE WAS STILL WORKING AND THAT THE TRADE PROBLEMS WERE ALL THE MORE REASON FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES TO REDOUBLE THEIR EFFORTS. ARBATOV SEEMED TO GIVE MORE WEIGHT TO CONGRESSIONAL LIMITATIONS ON CREDITS THAN TO EMIGRATION CONDITIONS AS THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE SOVIET REFUSAL OF MFN AND CREDITS. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF SALT, AND SAID THAT FOLLOWING THE SIGNING OF SALT II, THE TWO COUNTRIES COULD PROCEED RIGHT AWAY TO NEGOTIATIONS ON LOWER LEVELS. HE ADDED SOMEWHAT CRYPTICALLY THAT THE LEVELS COULD HAVE BEEN LOWER EVEN NOW, BUT EVENTS IN THE U.S. HAD MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. FRG AMBASSADOR SAHM HAS FILLED US IN ON A LONG DISSERTATION THAT USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV GAVE TO A VISITING GROUP OF WEST GERMAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS FIGURES (BERGDORFERKREIS) ON FEB 5. THE GROUP INCLUDED THEO SOMMER, EDITOR OF DIE ZEIT, OTHER FRG JOURNALISTS, AND SOME WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS. SOMMER TOOK A STRONGLY CRITICAL APPROACH TO SOVIET INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR, WHICH MAY HAVE ELICITED MORE INTERESTING COMMENTS FROM ARBATOV THAN WOULD ORDINARILY BE EXPECTED.

3. ARBATOV SPOKE STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF DETENTE AND OF CONTINUED EFFORTS TO MAKE IT IRREVERSIBLE. HE LAID PARTICULAR STRESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS. ARBATOV LISTED AS THE TWO MAJOR FACTORS IN DETENTE: FIRST, SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION OF PEACE OR WAR IN FAVOR OF PEACE AND, SECOND, ARMS LIMITATIONS. HE SAID THAT IF YOU ADD UP THE BALANCE SHEET OF DETENTE WITH THE WEST, BY ALL TESTS IT IS A POSITIVE ONE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE CITED THE OCTOBER 1973 MIDDLE EAST WAR AS ONE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN CATASTROPHIC WITHOUT DETENTE.

4. ARBATOV SAID THERE ARE MANY MENACES TODAY TO DETENTE AND THERE WILL BE MANY DIFFICULTIES IN THE FUTURE. HE SAID THAT THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET
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UNION WOULD NEVER BECOME ALLIES BECAUSE OF THEIR DIFFERENT SOCIAL SYSTEMS. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM SHOULD NOT BE SOLVED BY MILITARY MEANS. ARBATOV SAID THAT THE VLADIVOSTOK MEETING SHOWED THAT THE CHANGE IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT AFFECTED DETENTE. AND HE ADDED THAT U.S.-SOVIET TRADE PROBLEMS WERE ALL THE MORE REASON FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES TO REDOUBLE THEIR

EFFORTS ON DETENTE.

5. SOMMER COMMENTED THAT A POSSIBLE TRANSITION IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WOULD IMPERIL DETENTE SINCE THERE IS ALWAYS A PAUSE IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY DURING TRANSITIONS; HE POINTED TO THE PAUSE IN EFFORTS AT RAPPROCHMENT WITH THE WEST FOLLOWING KRUSHCHEV'S REMOVAL. ARBATOV SAID THAT DETENTE WAS NOT POSSIBLE RIGHT AFTER THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP TOOK OVER IN 1964. HE SAID IT COULD NOT COME EARLIER BECAUSE OF VIETNAM, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE U.S. BOMBING OF HANOI WHILE KOSYGIN WAS THERE. IN ANY CASE, HE SAID THAT DETENTE DOES NOT DEPEND ON INDIVIDUAL LEADERS.

6. IN RESPONSE TO SOMMER'S CRITICISM OF THE VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT'S FAILURE TO PROVIDE FOR SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC REDUCTIONS, ARBATOV SAID THAT THE QUESTION IS NOT WHAT IS BEST, BUT WHAT IS GOOD. HE NOTED THAT THE U.S. DECISION TO DEPLOY MIRVS CAME BEFORE SALT GOT UNDERWAY. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, HE ASKED, WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT? IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF FIXING A LOWER LEVEL ON LAUNCHERS AND ON MIRVS, ARBATOV SAID THAT HE HOPED SALT II COULD BE SIGNED THIS YEAR, AND THEN THE TWO SIDES COULD PROCEED RIGHT AWAY TO NEGOTIATION ON LOWER LEVELS. HE ADDED SOMEWHAT CRYPTICALLY THAT THE LEVELS COULD HAVE BEEN LOWER EVEN NOW, BUT EVENTS IN THE U.S. HAD MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE.

7. ARBATOV SAID THAT SALT I IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AGREEMENT YET SIGNED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. (COMMENT: THIS IS AN INTERESTING VARIATION OF THE STANDARD SOVIET LINE, WHICH TENDS TO PUT THE

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AGREEMENT ON PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR FIRST AMONG THE BILATERAL ACHIEVEMENTS.) ARBATOV CALLED SALT I AN EQUAL TREATY, ALLOWING FOR THE DIFFERENCES IN THE TWO SIDES' STRATEGIC SYSTEMS. HE SAID THAT SENATOR JACKSON'S INSISTENCE ON IDENTICAL NUMBERS WOULD MAKE IT HARDER TO GET REDUCTIONS, SINCE IT DECREASED U.S. FLEXIBILITY IN NEGOTIATIONS.

8. ON ECONOMIC RELATIONS, ARBATOV SAID THAT THE RESULTS OF THE TRADE ACT CRISIS WERE NEGLIGIBLE FOR U.S.-SOVIET TRADE. IT IS THE U.S. WHICH IS THE PRIMARY SUFFERER IN ECONOMIC TERMS, SINCE IN THE SOVIET FIVE-YEAR PLAN NOW BEING DRAWN UP, NOT MUCH WILL BE PROVIDED FOR THE U.S. INTERESTINGLY, ARBATOV SEEMED TO GIVE MUCH MORE WEIGHT TO THE PAUCITY OF CREDITS THAN TO POLITICAL CONDITIONS

IN DESCRIBING THE SOVIET DECISION TO REJECT MFN AND CREDITS. HE SAID THAT EXIM PROVIDED ONLY \$75 MILLION A YEAR, FROM WHICH (SIC) \$40 MILLION IN LEND LEASE PAYMENTS WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE SUBTRACTED, LEAVING ONLY \$35 MILLION A YEAR IN NET GOVERNMENT CREDITS. HE ADDED THAT 18 MONTHS WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE TIME PERIOD FOR MFN BECAUSE OF THE GREAT DIFFICULTY THE SOVIETS WOULD HAVE IN DEVELOPING MARKETS IN THE U.S. WITHIN 18 MONTHS.

9. CONTINUING THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT, ARBATOV SAID THAT BILATERAL U.S.-SOVIET TRADE WAS NOT TOO IMPORTANT FOR THE SOVIET UNION SINCE IT DID NOT AMOUNT TO A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SOVIET TRADE. MOREOVER, ARBATOV CHALLENGED THE BELIEF THAT THE USSR IS IN NEED OF WESTERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. HE SAID THAT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY THE MAIN THING WAS NOT WHAT THE SOVIETS GOT FROM THE WEST, BUT HOW THE SOVIET UNION BROUGHT THE RESULTS OF ITS OWN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INTO PRODUCTION. IT WAS ONLY AFTER A LONG RECITATION OF SUCH ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT ARBATOV SET OUT THE FAMILIAR ARGUMENTS AGAINST INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

10. THE GERMANS AT THE MEETING FELT THAT ARBATOV HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN MAINLY TO QUIET POSSIBLE GERMAN CONCERN THAT THE SETBACK TO U.S.-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONS MIGHT

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HAVE A FALLOUT EFFECT ON DETENTE IN GENERAL. ARBATOV EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO EFFECT ON SOVIET-FRG RELATIONS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE VERY ANXIOUS TO FIND ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERS TO THE U.S. IN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO BUTTER UP HIS AUDIENCE, HE SAID THAT THE MOVEMENT IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PRIOR MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE FRG, FRANCE, CANADA, AND JAPAN (HE LEFT OUT THE UK).
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